

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Hotel Windermere East

and/or common Windermere House

2. Location

street & number 1642 East 56th Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Chicago

N/A vicinity of

congressional district 1ST

state Illinois 60637

code 012

county COOK

code 031

3. Classification

Category

district
 building(s)
 structure
 site
 object

Ownership

public
 private
 both
Public Acquisition
 in process
 being considered
N/A

Status

occupied
 unoccupied
 work in progress
Accessible
 yes: restricted
 yes: unrestricted
 no

Present Use

agriculture
 commercial
 educational
 entertainment
 government
 industrial
 military
 museum
 park
 private residence
 religious
 scientific
 transportation
 other: apartments

4. Owner of Property

name Windermere Associates, as beneficiary from:
American National Bank & Trust Company U/T No. 50472, dtd. 12/1/80

street & number 228 North LaSalle Street - Room 2020

city, town Chicago

N/A vicinity of

state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Building

street & number 118 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago

state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____

state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hotel Windermere East was designed to meet the requirements of both transient and permanent guests. When completed in early 1924, it contained 200 apartments, arranged in suites of one to five rooms, and 482 hotel guest rooms. Many of the guest rooms contained kitchenettes, and the floor plan provided for connecting guest rooms to form suites.

The Windermere is twelve stories high plus a penthouse for storage and elevator equipment, and a basement, which was designed to provide service facilities. It was designed as a companion to the original Windermere Hotel (1892) formerly located on the block west of the present building. The hotels were connected by two underground tunnels, one for guests and one for service. The first floor of the Hotel Windermere East was designed to accommodate public and private functions as well as several commercial enterprises.

The exterior of the Hotel Windermere East is finished with a light cream brick made from a "metal mixed clay" which provides a rich facade with terra cotta trim. The ground, first and second floors are sheathed in terra cotta formed to duplicate stone in a free adaptation of Renaissance Revival elements. There is an ornamental band above the first floor windows and another above the third floor windows. The space between the third floor windows is filled by elaborate terra cotta ornament. The exterior walls from the fourth through tenth floors are straightforward brick walls punctured by double-hung windows as single units or in groups of three. A terra cotta sub-cornice separates the eleventh and twelfth floors from those below. The windows on these two floors are somewhat more elaborate, and there is a terra cotta cornice above the twelfth floor which effectively terminates the shaft of the structure. The central portion of the building extends upwards two more floors above the cornice. These two floors contain storage spaces for tenants and building equipment, but no apartments.

The building is essentially "U" shaped, with the base of the "U" on the north and wings on the east and west extending towards 56th Street. The primary entrance is through a "vestibule" located on the south central part of the property and connected to the main structure by a permanent foyer. The vestibule is approximately 25 feet square with a similar interior ceiling height. The vestibule is built of the same brick as the remainder of the building, with elaborate terra cotta ornament. There are double hung entrance doors for pedestrians on the east and west facades of the vestibule, and similar doors on the south for guests arriving by automobile. The south entrance is protected by a splendid "marquise" roof of ornamental iron, sheet metal, and glass, which cantilevers over the driveway. The floor of the vestibule and the connecting foyer is marble, and the walls are terra cotta. The ceiling is done in ornamental plaster. The windows in both the vestibule and foyer are wood sash with small panes of glass. Those sash which operate are casements. Minor alterations have been made to these areas, all of which are currently scheduled for restoration.

The public spaces on the main floor of the Windermere were executed at a grand scale, using ornamental decorative elements throughout. Materials include marble, terra cotta, bronze, fine paneling, and ornamental plaster. Many parts of this portion of the hotel have been covered over or otherwise obscured, but many of the original decorative

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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elements are still present and have been restored or are scheduled for restoration. Where modern codes or laws require alteration, great care has been taken to maintain the original architectural character. For example, the original elevator cabs had to be reduced in size to accommodate various safety features. The new cabs actually were constructed using the elaborate wood paneling from the original cabs in an entirely appropriate manner. Plans for other work in the Windermere call for similar attention to detail.

The floors above the first floor were originally all identical. Over the years, changes have been made, generally combining rooms to form additional or larger apartments. The current owners have embarked on an ambitious program to adapt the entire building as a rental apartment building. The basic configuration of the building has not been altered. Hallways remain in place, doorways have been reused, and the elevator lobby spaces remain. All of these spaces have been cleaned, painted, newly carpeted, and restored. Certain original custom designed furniture has been retained and will be continued in use. Many of the original apartments have been retained, although new kitchen equipment, additional electrical facilities and air conditioning units have been added. Individual hotel guest rooms have been appended to existing apartments. Thus, many apartments have been increased in size. The result is an apartment building of high quality with a wide choice of room configurations.

A major logistics problem during the adaptation and restoration has been the need to avoid displacing long-time tenants. This has been accommodated by dividing the work into phases. The west one-half of the building, above the first floor, was adapted first. The eastern half is now under way. Some moving of tenants has been required, but great effort has been expended to avoid inconvenience to residents as much as possible. The final phase, which includes the ground floor, public spaces, exterior restoration and landscaping, will be done after the apartments have been finished.

The present owners of the Hotel Windermere East, recently renamed Windermere House, have budgeted several million dollars towards the adaptation and restoration of the building as high quality apartments. Initial plans called for relatively modest work to be done in the public spaces both in the interior and exterior of the building. During the progress of the work, selective removals have indicated that a substantial portion of the original fabric of the building remains and can be restored. Some of this work has been accomplished. National Register status will, of course, provide a very substantial incentive for completion of the work. The tax credits which may accrue to the project will offset a small but significant part of the cost. The ultimate result will be a superb renovation of an architecturally important building located in a critical area of Chicago.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
				(Local history)		

Specific dates 1923 - 24

Builder/Architect Rapp & Rapp, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Windermere House on East 56th Street stands as a reminder of the days when grand apartment hotels lined the South Side's shore line. Built in 1923-24, it joined a tradition which included the original Windermere Hotel just across Cornell Avenue, the Shoreland, the Del Prado, the Sherry, the Chicago Beach, the Flamingo, and the Hyde Park Hotel. The building, with its impressive entrance, stands across the street from Jackson Park and the Museum of Science and Industry. It was designed by Architects Rapp and Rapp in 1922. This architectural firm was founded in 1906 and combined the talents of two brothers, C.W. Rapp and George Rapp. They are best known for their designs of theatres for the Balaban and Katz movie house chain. Rapp and Rapp's theatres include the Tivoli, the Rivera, the Uptown, and the Chicago located on State Street in the heart of the business district. The firm also designed the Bismark Hotel and theatre, and the multi-purpose Oriental Theatre and Masonic Temple.

The Hotel Windermere East (as it was originally called) stands as the most impressive example of the Rapps' work which was not connected with show business in one manner or the other. Its impressive Crystal Ballroom was the scene of many South Side celebrations. The Anchorage Rooms were known throughout the city for elegant dining. Heading down to 56th Street for an "English Breakfast" was a long standing Hyde Park and Chicago tradition. The hotel hosted many important guests who visited either the nearby University of Chicago or the Museum of Science and Industry. Phillip Roth refers to the Windermere as the best place to stay in Hyde Park in his novel Letting Go. It was also discussed in Edna Ferber's A Peculiar Treasure (1947), and in Natural Shocks by Richard Stern (1978). It was the place where the Baltimore Colts and the Los Angeles Rams stayed when visiting Chicago during the 1950's and early 1960's. The importance of the Windermere and the other nearby lakefront hotels began to diminish with the decline of nearby Midway Airport.

The Windermere is located in an area that was very important for the city's early development. This is true in several respects. First, it was designed to take full advantage of an excellent location on the north boundary of Olmstead's Jackson Park overlooking what was then the ruins of the Fine Arts Building built for the Columbian Exposition. In 1930, that building was reconstructed as the Museum of Science and Industry. It is an effective and prominent terminus for the north end of Jackson Park and provides its occupants with an unparalleled view. Secondly, it is located just down the street from the old Hyde Park Art Colony, which gave the neighborhood a tradition of excellence in the arts and of bohemian living. Maxwell Bodenheim, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Sherwood Anderson, James T. Farrell, Meyer Levin, and many others were connected with this colony which was destroyed by time and urban renewal. The grand Windermere East stood out, hovering over the park, looking down at the small former World's Fair concession stands that made up the artists' studios. During the life of the hotel, it has been the stopping place for countless members of the intellectual elite who have had such an important role in the shaping of Hyde Park as a community. It is indeed part of the

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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great "Hyde Park - University of Chicago" community which has been so important to the cultural history of Chicago.

For a time, the Windermere Hotel was owned by the University of Chicago, which bought the building in 1973, fearing that its deteriorating condition might continue or that new owners might misuse the property. At that time there were 180 apartments and 100 transient units in the hotel. The building also housed medical and dental offices, as well as the Anchorage Restaurant.

In 1980, the present ownership acquired the building. A major renovation effort was begun in 1981. During the progress of the work, the owners have become increasingly aware of the architectural and historic importance of the building. Current policy of the owners is to restore the exterior and the interior public spaces to a condition near the original, while complying with modern Code requirements. Thus, they expect to preserve a visual anchor and a strong physical reminder of the cultural heritage of the community.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Nancy Banks, "The Late Great Bohemians of Hyde Park", Hyde Parker (April-May 1973)

Jean F. Block, Hyde Park Homes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

(Continued on Continuation Sheet #3)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.1909

Quadrangle name Jackson Park

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

Zone	Easting			Northing							

B

Zone	Easting			Northing							

C

Zone	Easting			Northing							

D

Zone	Easting			Northing							

E

Zone	Easting			Northing							

F

Zone	Easting			Northing							

G

Zone	Easting			Northing							

H

Zone	Easting			Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 17 to 22 inclusive in Block 3 in Illinois Central Subdivision of the West part of the South West 14.09 acres of the fractional Southwest 1/4 of Section 12,

(Continued on Continuation Sheet #3)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Wilbert R. Hasbrouck, FAIA, Architect

organization HISTORIC RESOURCES

date March 31, 1982

street & number 711 South Dearborn Street

telephone (312) 922-7211

city or town Chicago

state Illinois 60605

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

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Carl W. Condit, Chicago, 1910-29: Building, Planning, and Urban Technology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Glen E. Holt and Dominic A. Pacyga, Chicago, A Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979.

Hyde Park Herald, 18 June 1979.

Will Leonard, "Tower Ticker", Chicago Tribune, 8 January 1952.

Phillip Roth, Letting Go, New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

Smith Wright, "Windermere Hotel Lends Elite Touch to Dining, Banquets". Sun-Times, 28 August 1961.

Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin, 26 (9 August 1941).

Edna Ferber, A Peculiar Treasure. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1947, p.278.

Richard Stern, Natural Shocks. New York: Coward, McCann and Geogheghan, 1978.

"New Windermere: \$6,000,000", The Economist, Vol. LXVII (1922), #22, June 3, 1922, p. 1278.

"The Hotels Windermere of Chicago", The Hotel Monthly, Vol. 30, No. 356, November, 1922, pp. 21-24.

"Grafton's World's Fair Special to Hotel Windermere". Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., Printers and Engravers, 1893.

10. Geographical Data - Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Township 38 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian and West part of the Northwest 17.93 acres in the fractional Northwest 1/4 of Section 13, Township 38 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Cook County, Illinois.